

*“PORQUE HACÍ YA CONOCEMOS”*: DIALOGIC WAYS OF KNOWING  
THROUGH DIGITAL LEARNING COMMUNITIES AND CRITICAL COACHING

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The purpose of this qualitative action research case study was to create dialogic, power-sharing spaces that recognized the diverse ways of knowing that teachers, families, and students brought to mutually-constructed learning environments through two strategies, digital learning communities and critical coaching. Specifically, the study explored how families, teachers, and students engaged in digital learning communities; how these parties exercised power in these digital spaces; and how critical coaching partnerships formed between teachers and literacy coaches. The researcher (a literacy coach) engaged in a critical coaching partnership with an early childhood educator over the course of four months. Engagements in this partnership included initial and final interviews, eight coaching conversations to engage in critical self-reflection and plan social justice-infused action and advocacy, and simultaneous construction of a digital learning community that engaged families with equal voices on a platform where all members could post, view, comment, and favorite media in a private, password-protected digital space.

The findings in this study suggested the ripe potential for creating critical learning spaces that validate the many ways of knowing of families, teachers, and students through critical coaching and digital learning communities. Thematic analysis, visual analysis, and critical discourse analysis were applied to the data collected through observations, weekly participant reflections, coaching conversations, artifacts curated from the digital learning community, documents such as cultural memoirs, interviews, and surveys. Through this

analysis, significant themes developed in both digital learning communities and critical coaching. Two findings emerged from digital learning communities: (1) families did have access to technology and the internet, especially via smartphones, despite the lower socioeconomic status of the school population; and (2) participation in digital learning communities depended on the unique needs and interests of families, teachers, and students. Additionally, two findings emerged from critical coaching: (1) self-reflection occurred through defining educators' identities as cultural beings, as well as by naming and challenging assumptions; and (2) taking action occurred through critical networks, advocacy in public spaces, and planning culturally relevant pedagogy. Findings also yielded tips for forming digital learning communities and essential conditions of critical coaching.